



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Santa Monica Mountains
National Recreation Area

401 W. Hillcrest Drive
Thousand Oaks, California
91360-4207

805-370-2301 phone
805-370-1850 fax

Natural, Cultural and Recreational Impacts from the 2013 Springs Fire

Summary: The Springs Fire burned a large swath of the most undeveloped and pristine habitat in the Santa Monica Mountains. Such a large fire so early in the fire season is unprecedented, at least in recorded history. As such, it's difficult to predict how nature will respond. The following is an assessment of known damage to natural, cultural and recreational resources.

Plants

- Burned a unique assemblage of vegetation communities, including
 - two federally listed endangered plant species, one federally threatened species, and nine species identified as sensitive by the California Native Plant Society.
 - The entire known population of Verity's dudleya, a federally threatened species.
 - 20% of the Santa Monica Mountains' coastal sage scrub, which is globally threatened.
 - the largest native grassland in the Santa Monica Mountains (La Jolla Canyon)
 - the only stabilized dune habitat in the Santa Monica Mountains (Point Mugu)
- Potential for rapid spread of non-native invasive species, especially given the fact that the fire came several months before the winter rains. Invasive species need less moisture to re-sprout.

Wildlife

- Burned largest contiguous natural habitat for wildlife in the Santa Monica Mountains, including sensitive species such as the California newt, coast horned lizard and coast patch-nose snake.
- While numerous dead woodrats and snakes were observed in the burn area immediately after the fire, little is known about how fire impacts wildlife in the Southern California ecosystem.
- Larger mammals and birds may be able to escape the fire, but the aftermath of the fire presents challenges such as a lack of food and reduced habitat. One bobcat was documented as having burned paws and singed whiskers and is believed to have starved to death.

Watershed

- Burned most or all of two key watersheds in the Santa Monica Mountains (La Jolla and Sycamore Canyons).
- The biggest concern is the loss of ground cover, which can lead to erosion, flooding and potentially harmful debris flow. Approximately 53% of the burned area is at risk of erosion, based on a combination of steep slopes and lack of vegetative cover.

Archaeology

- More than 150 archaeology sites were impacted by the fire. The most common type of site was artifact scatters, many containing marine shell or other indications of minor middens (pre-historic trash heaps).

Recreation

- 100 wood stairs on the Satwiwa Loop Trail at Rancho Sierra Vista burned and closed the trail for several weeks. The stairs were completed only a few weeks prior to the fire by a local Boy Scout troop.
- Trails and campgrounds in Point Mugu State Park suffered the most extensive damage, forcing weeks of closures. Trail impacts included downed or unstable trees and unsafe canyon slopes and trail surfaces.
- The paved route from Rancho Sierra Vista into Sycamore Canyon suffered significant damage due to extreme heat and possible damage from fire engines.

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) is the largest urban national park in the country, encompassing more than 150,000 acres of mountains and coastline in Ventura and Los Angeles counties. It comprises a seamless network of local, state, and federal parks interwoven with private lands and communities. As one of only five Mediterranean ecosystems in the world, SMMNRA preserves the rich biological diversity of more than 450 animal species and 26 distinct plant communities. Learn more at www.nps.gov/samo.

###